



River Navigators: [front, left to right] - Alex Rogers (Upper Susquehanna/Lackawanna), Glenn Kinser (Potomac), Johanna Hunter (Blackstone/Woonasquatucket), Barbara Elkus (St. Johns), Loretta Neumann (former AHR Task Force Director), Paul Jeske (Willamette), [back, left to right] Captain Robert D. Innes (Lower Mississippi), Stephen R. Davis (Cuyahoga), Ben Borda (New), Miguel Flores (Rio Grande), Dan Burke (Connecticut), Eric Scherer (Hudson), Owen Dutt (Upper Mississippi), and John Hartig (Detroit).

### ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS

American Heritage Rivers initiative “community partners” include citizens’ groups, elected officials, municipal environmental and tourism agencies, chambers of commerce, industry, representatives, shipping and port officials, experts in environmental restoration and historic preservation, and non-governmental organizations. The partnerships they have formed vary in structure according to local needs and customs but in all cases they are the backbone of the initiative. They work to achieve community consensus, set priorities, and keep the public, the Administration, and Members of Congress informed of their progress and other issues relating to the initiative.

### ROLE OF RIVER NAVIGATORS

River Navigators are the face of the federal government in the local communities. They work to identify a broad range of federal and other resources compatible with their community partners’ objectives, and also foster agency awareness and interagency cooperation to address their communities’ priorities and projects.

Acting as liaisons between the community and the appropriate federal programs, River Navigators provide technical support, engage state, tribal and local government and private sector interest, and perform other services consistent with the goals of the initiative. As a result of their efforts, communities are better equipped to achieve the goals of their locally-driven action plans



AHR Interagency Committee meeting - Washington DC



River Navigator training workshop - Washington DC

# STRUCTURE OF THE INITIATIVE

## INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

E. O. 13061 creates the American Heritage Rivers Interagency Committee, responsible for implementing the initiative. The Committee is chaired by the Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality and a rotating co-chair. The Committee is composed of the following members or designees at the assistant secretary level or higher:

- The Secretary of Defense
- Attorney General
- Secretary of the Interior
- Secretary of Agriculture
- Secretary of Commerce
- Secretary of Housing & Urban Development
- Secretary of Energy
- Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
- Secretary of Transportation
- Chair, National Endowment for the Arts
- Chair, National Endowment for the Humanities.
- Chair, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Each of these departments and agencies oversees programs and services that are authorized by Congress and can benefit citizens in riverfront communities. Other federal agencies and departments have also volunteered their help, including the Department of Education, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), General Services Administration (GSA) and Small Business Administration (SBA).

### TASK FORCE

To assist the Committee in implementing the initiative, an Interagency Task Force was put into place. It currently includes three senior level staff members representing agencies on the Committee: Frances Eargle, agency representative

from the Environmental Protection Agency, chairs the Interagency Task Force and serves as Director of the American Heritage Rivers Initiative. Ms. Loretta Neumann, Former Director, was an Agency Representative from the U.S. Department of Transportation. Also on the Task Force are: Matthew Donoghue (representing the Department of Energy), Director of Communications and Government Affairs; Associate Directors Bess Gillelan (representing the Department of Commerce), and Jerald L. White (representing the Department of Interior). They are assisted by an Interagency Working Group to match community needs with available resources.

### INTERAGENCY WORKGROUP

A federal workgroup was developed to assist federal agencies, River Navigators, and local communities in carrying out their Community Plan of Action in a coordinated and helpful way. The workgroup also helps identify any potential problems that may arise in carrying out the objectives of the initiative.



AHR Interagency Committee, Principal Deputies meeting - Washington DC

## Nominating Process Inspires Pride, Priorities and Planning

### COMMUNITY PLAN OF ACTION

As part of the nomination process, communities were asked to develop a Community Plan of Action with projects designed to reflect the three objectives of the initiative: 1) economic revitalization; 2) natural resource and environmental protection; and 3) historic and cultural preservation. Many of the communities also included additional objectives encompassing education and public outreach. In developing their plans, communities set their own priorities with a common vision celebrating their common heritage. The plans emerged through consensus building, sometimes over large territories, multi-state or multi-jurisdiction, with a strategy that was broadly supported and a newfound appreciation of diversity and respect for each community's distinctive nature.

### PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Communities were asked to enter into agreements with the federal government within 90 days of designation to identify the proposed federal roles and responsibilities in helping communities to carry out the Community Action Plans. The agreement also identifies the role of the River Navigator and defines the job descriptions for the River Navigator assigned to the river community, and sets the benchmarks and describes the respective roles of the federal and local river partners. The agreements may also identify priority projects described in the original AHR application.



Angela Falgoust, Chair of Louisiana River Parishes on the Lower Mississippi.

*"As Chair of the Parishes of the Lower Mississippi, I commend the works of the federal partners and navigators...much is yet to be done but with an ongoing win-win partnership created by this Initiative, much can be done for we do indeed have many miles to go before we sleep."*

Angela Falgoust, Chair, AHR Lower Mississippi



Congressman Silvestre Reyes signing the American Heritage Rivers Rio Grande MOU at a January 27, 1999 White House ceremony. Looking on is George Frampton, Chairman of the Council of Environmental Quality and Elizabeth Flores, Mayor of Laredo, Texas.



Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber and 12 year old Aaron Wells, 1999 author of winning poem about the Willamette watershed, at the Willamette signing event.

*"I want to thank the many individuals and agencies who contributed to the development of the Willamette Restoration Strategy. The American Heritage River Initiative is among the many federal agency partners who provided staff and funding assistance and committed to making the Willamette restoration a locally-based process."*

Governor John Kitzhaber (D-OR)



## Selection of Rivers

An application packet and brochure were prepared that described the intent of the initiative and the process for community nominations. Each successful river nomination would include:

- Broad support for the designation;

- A range of features illustrating the distinctive qualities of the Nation's river heritage;

- Demonstrated willingness and capability for river communities to work in partnership with a wide range of organizations and interests;

- A broad plan of action for the river; and

- Measurable benefits for the community from designation.

Overall the response to the initiative and the public call for nominations from local communities was positive and overwhelming. The Administration received 126 nominations from 46 States and the District of Columbia. Nearly 200 members of Congress, more than 500 mayors, and 21 governors of both parties expressed their support, and many became actively engaged in championing specific rivers. There were thousands of letters from supporters, including many moving and thoughtful words from private citizens and school children, speaking out on behalf of "their" river and its designation. One such submission was the nomination for the Rio Grande River. A 7th grade class at Gadsden Middle School in Anthony, New Mexico created a quilt with individual squares representing views

of the river, with accompanying poems and letters to the President asking the Rio Grande be included as an American Heritage River. (This section of the Rio Grande was ultimately excluded from the designation because of opposition raised by a Member of Congress).



AHR Nomination quilt submitted by youth from Gadsden Middle School in Anthony, New Mexico.

November 21, 1997

To whom it may concern,

I am an 8th grade student at Gadsden Middle School in Anthony, New Mexico. I would like to nominate the Rio Grande as a heritage river. This river is a major source of our water here in the southwest. I am part of a ongoing project to restore the Rio Grande in our area. It would mean a lot to me and the people of Anthony for you to name the Rio Grande as a heritage river. If it wasn't for this river the southwest would be pure desert. The river mean's a lot not only to me but to the animals of the southwest.

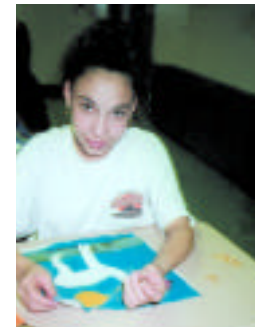
Thank you for taking time to read my letter. I know I am only a 8th grader, but am an 8th grader that cares for the Rio Grande.

Sincerely,

David Herrera

*David Herrera*

Student at Gadsden Mid. School



Gadsden Middle School student sewing panel of a AHR "nomination quilt" for the Rio Grande.

## STRUCTURE OF THE INITIATIVE

### River Navigator Makes A Difference

#### **Partnership Brings About Change in Revitalizing Downtown North Providence, RI**

The City of North Providence sought to relocate its current post office to a spot closer to the river and more central to beneficial use by its citizens. The River Navigator brought members of the US Postal Service, Department of Transportation, EPA and other agencies to view the proposed location and to explore options to expedite the relocation.

Thanks to tremendous cooperation from the US Postal Service the city was able to orchestrate relocating the current post office to a parcel closer to the river where it will serve as the anchor for a small commercial complex.

The new location will include up-to-date stormwater improvements and also provide for safer access and egress for citizens using public transportation by moving the bus turnaround into the new area (through USDOT and state DOT).

EPA has also been asked to consider adding a pedestrian bridge from the adjacent Superfund property to the new post office parking lot to allow for senior citizens to have safer walking connections. Construction on the new facility has begun, with substantial savings to the public. North Providence should have its new Post Office Center in 2001.



Blackstone & Woonasquatucket Rivers in Providence, RI

### Federal Advisory Committee

The President appointed a blue ribbon Advisory Committee (FACA) chaired by Dayton Duncan, (noted author) which, made a recommendation to the President in a final Report, dated July 1, 1998. The FACA considered all of the nominations across the Nation and made a recommendation to designate 10 rivers. The FACA based its recommendations, on the technical merits of the proposals, and the diversity of individual rivers.

## Designation

On July 30, 1998, President Clinton and Vice President Gore traveled to the New River in North Carolina and designated 14 American Heritage Rivers; they are:

### AMERICAN HERITAGE RIVERS

Blackstone/Woonasquatucket Rivers (RI/MA)  
 Connecticut River (CT,NH,MA,VT)  
 Cuyahoga River (OH)  
 Detroit River (MI)  
 Hanalei River (HI)  
 Hudson River (NY)  
 Lower Mississippi River (LA,TN)  
 New River (NC,VA,WV)  
 Potomac River (MD,DC,PA,VA, WV)  
 Rio Grande (TX)  
 St. John's River (FL)  
 Willamette River (OR)  
 Upper Susquehanna/Lackawanna Rivers (PA)  
 Upper Mississippi River (IA,IL,MN,WI, MO)

Federal agencies worked to honor their commitments for assisting all of the nominated rivers. A symposium was held in October, 1998, in Atlanta, Georgia that brought together representatives of both nominated and designated river communities throughout the country with Federal agency representatives to share information, ideas, and expertise.

## Opt In/Opt Out Policy

Participation in the American Heritage Rivers initiative is entirely voluntary and locally driven. The river communities were self-nominated. Additionally, a policy has been established that allows already designated American Heritage River communities to request to add in sections of a river or watershed to the designation. Likewise, the E.O. policy order allows communities to opt out at any time.

Two designated river stretches, the Lower and Upper Mississippi, have formally requested opt-in's for the two rivers. These opt-in's include the addition of 7 more river communities in the Upper Mississippi River designated areas, as well as the 8 counties that comprise the Upper Mississippi Headwaters Board. Two cities have also been added to the Lower Mississippi — Natchez/Adams County, MS, and Vicksburg/Warren County, MS. (These requests have a broad range of community support and President Clinton is likely to approve this request).

*"This designation will allow us to more fully utilize the Mississippi River as a resource to strengthen our ties to the Nation, create opportunities for our citizens, and allow the Mississippi River to be a front door to our historic city."*  
 Mayor Robert M. Walker, Vicksburg, MS

*"The City of Natchez and Adams County hopes to work with our neighbors in Louisiana and Tennessee through networking, the development of regional economic development projects, promoting regional tourism opportunities and through other efforts."*  
 Mayor F. L. "Hank" Smith, Natchez, MS

*"Through our common goals and interest in the River, we learn new science and natural facts from each other. We advance our diverse cultures and strengthen our economies."*  
 Jane E. Van Hunnik, Director, Mississippi Headwaters Board, Minnesota.